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SIPDIS

NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE AND IPA; NSC FOR SHAPIRO/KUMAR

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PBTS](#) [PREF](#) [PHUM](#) [KWBG](#) [KPAL](#) [IS](#)
SUBJECT: IDF DEMOLISHES 18 SITES IN NORTHERN JORDAN VALLEY;
190 DISPLACED

Classified By: Deputy Principal Officer Greg Marchese for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (SBU) Summary. The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) demolished structures at 18 sites in the northern Jordan Valley on June 4, displacing 190 Palestinians from their homes in Area C. Tubas Governor Sami Musallam claimed the demolitions are designed to drive Palestinians from the Jordan Valley and prejudge the outcome of future final status negotiations. UN contacts expressed concern that a nearby site, al-Hadidiya, would be demolished imminently, and requested USG intervention to prevent further demolitions.
End Summary.

18 Sites Demolished; 190 Displaced

¶2. (SBU) On June 4, UN sources and local Palestinians reported demolitions of Bedouin herding community houses and structures in the Khirbet Ras al-Ahmar area of the Jordan Valley, north of Beqa'ot settlement. Dozens of military vehicles, three Civil Administration vehicles, three bulldozers, and one crane demolished structures at 18 distinct sites in Area C, according to local residents and the Governor of Tubas, Sami Musallam, displacing 190 people.

¶3. (C) Poloff visited the sites several hours after the demolitions and was told that some families were given no time to retrieve their belongings. At two sites, residents said IDF soldiers tipped over water barrels, spilling the contents on the ground to discourage the residents from returning. A PA Ministry of Agriculture official estimated damages at USD 400,000, including a six-month old UN/Japanese livestock project. The project had received a verbal approval from Israeli authorities, according to Musallam.

¶4. (C) An official at the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs said OCHA's chief concern is the nearby site of al-Hadidiya. Residents in al-Hadidiya received demolition orders at the same time as Khirbet Ras al-Ahmar, and IDF contacts told OCHA that both sets of orders had received the necessary final approvals from IDF Central Command.

Tubas Governor:
Demolitions Facilitate GOI Negotiating Position

¶5. (C) Musallam claimed to Poloff that the repetitive demolitions are linked to a GOI negotiating strategy. "This is part of the Israeli policy to evict Palestinians from areas they don't want to negotiate about, namely the Jordan Valley," Musallam said. "By these measures, they are preparing to say in future negotiations, 'There are no Palestinians here, so why do you want it?'," he added. Musallam said these actions had the potential to push the disproportionately young, conservative, and undereducated

Bedouin populace towards extremism: "The inability of the PA to do anything" to counter the Israeli actions "may lead people to take the law into their own hands, especially against Israelis," he said.

Comment

¶ 6. (C) Since Defense Minister Ehud Barak's verbal commitment in March 2008 to former Secretary Rice and PA Prime Minister Salam Fayyad that the GOI would not demolish homes in Area C, nearly 400 Palestinians have been displaced and over 160 structures have been demolished in the West Bank, including the June 4 demolitions, according to Post and UN figures.

WALLES